

Armchair Quarterbacks Have Unprecedented Access To NFL Games

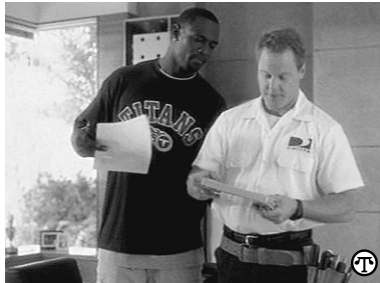
(NAPSA)—Millions of Americans dedicate Sunday afternoons to following their favorite NFL teams and players. For the networks that carry the games, NFL football is the undisputed king of sports television, but it wasn't always that way.

On November 17, 1968, NBC's network executives believed the Oakland Raiders had no chance of overcoming a two-touchdown deficit against the New York Jets. So they preempted the conclusion of the football telecast in favor of a new episode of "Heidi," causing millions of fans to miss the Raiders scoring two late touchdowns to win.

The "Heidi" game was a benchmark low for broadcast coverage of the NFL. Thirty years later and a century removed, football fans watching the NFL at home, have more access to games, and control of what they see, than ever before.

Advancements in satellite and personal recording technology have turned a casual Sunday at home into an interactive experience capable of quenching the viewing desire of even the most rabid football fan.

Services such as DirecTV's "NFL Sunday Ticket" provide fans with access to any of the 13 NFL games being played each week. As if that isn't enough, fans can use Microsoft's Ultimate TV with DirecTV to get up-to-the-second stats from the Web, while watching the game. Like its competitor TiVo, Ultimate TV



New technology such as DirecTV can help football fans or in this case Tennessee Titans Jevon Kearse follow their favorite teams all season long.

allows viewers to pause, rewind and play in slow motion everything they see.

These technological advancements put control back in consumers' hands to decide which games they want to watch, and when they want to watch them. Eventually, this technology can eliminate the term "football widow" by allowing even the most ardent fan to enjoy Sunday brunch without the fear of missing kick off.

Ultimate TV takes the control a step further allowing fans who are watching the game to receive up to the minute statistics through their television and even allows them to communicate via e-mail with other fans during the broadcast.

With ever-increasing numbers of football fans participating in fantasy leagues, DirecTV "NFL Sunday Ticket" in combination

with these other services provide the die-hard fan with a vital link to all of their players and teams.

"I've subscribed to DirecTV's 'NFL Sunday Ticket' for the past three seasons so that I can see first-hand how all of my players are doing every week," said Steve Caric, 22 from Newport Beach, California. "This year, I upgraded to get Ultimate TV so I have access to up-to-the-minute stats, while I am watching the games."

Caric is not alone, subscriptions to "NFL Sunday Ticket" are approaching the one million mark and rising. At \$179, the fee is roughly the cost of a family of four going to a single game. With the majority of subscribers still being displaced fans, who traditionally wouldn't have access to their favorite team, the cost is a small price to pay.

"We live in an interactive age," said Brad Beale, DirecTV's vice president of advanced products. "Consumer demand has driven technology to provide more options, so that fans can customize their viewing experience to their needs. This technological revolution will continue to evolve to the point where viewing a game on television is every bit as good as being at the stadium."

One thing is clear, whether you are a football fanatic, or casual fan, it is nice to know that in the last two minutes of an exciting game, you won't have to worry about seeing "Heidi" on your screen.